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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE OTHER PHASE

SIR,—I have read with attention the few pages contributed by Mr. Phelps to your November issue. The feeling which this article expresses is very noble, and although at this time of day Mr. Phelps can cherish no illusions about the futility of his denunciation of war, it is not amiss that such a voice should be heard.

But apart from the idealist's point of view, there is another which Mr. Phelps overlooks to the extent of making his appeal decidedly misleading.

Mr. Phelps seems to think that all wars are wrong and useless, "never settling the rights and wrongs of any conflict of opinion," and consequently he is inclined to condemn in the lump all wars and all belligerents. It is characteristic of this spirit that he hardly finds a word of sympathy for Belgium—undoubtedly a victim of war—probably because Belgium, helpless as she was, chose to show fight.

But this is a view which will not stand even superficial examination. What does Mr. Phelps think of the Independence War, of the Greek rebellion against Turkey, of the Italian rebellion against Austria, of the anti-German agitation in Alsace-Lorraine? There are hundreds of historic instances showing that peoples have gained morally by going to war.

The effect of Mr. Phelps's pages on many minds with less training and less leisure than he has himself, and ought to use to dispel clouds, will be to convince them that everybody is equally to blame in the European war, and that this purely negative attitude is the best kind of neutrality. The reason which he gives in support of his point of view, *viz.*, that the "good and intelligent people" in every one of the nations at war are all equally convinced of their right, will probably strike some people as irrefutable and will leave them under the impression that it is useless to go into the details of an insoluble question.

This is what I think extraordinary in a university professor whose business it is to give the example of a virile critical spirit. Mr. Phelps can handle an historical question; he can make use of documents; he certainly knows the trend of European history in the last fifty years. Bearing this in mind and with the recent evidence at hand, how can he say that France, England, Russia, and Germany are all equally responsible for this war? In fact, the same issue in which Mr. Phelps's effusion appeared contained discussions of facts which he must have thought destructive of his position, and I only wish to point out what I consider an intellectual example of the more dangerous character because it is given by an unquestionably noble and Christian character.

ERNEST DIMNET.

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